Measures for smooth travel of Haj pilgrims

455. SHRI P. RAJEEVE: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:-

(a) whether the Ministry had taken any measures for the smooth travel of Haj pilgrims from India;

(b) if so, whether there is any statistics with regard to Haj pilgrims annually from Kerala;

(c) what are the measures taken for the Haj pilgrims from Kerala; and

(d) whether the Central Government proposes for introduction of large aircraft from Kerala due to the heavy rush of Haj pilgrims and less number of low cost airlines in this sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The number of ballottee pilgrims carried from Kerala's Kozhikode station during the last 3 years *viz.* 2007, 2008 and 2009 is 8606, 9938 and 8600 respectively.

(c) and (d) A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with M/s. National Air Services (NAS) of Saudi Arabia to carry pilgrims from Calicut to Jeddah. NAS had provided aircrafts having a capacity of 238 seats and had agreed to mount additional capacity towards the end of Phase I to make good any possible shortfall.

Small airports in NER

456. SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has any plan for setting up of small airports in North Eastern Region States to boost the tourism sector which is one of the major revenue earning head;

(b) if so, the details thereof with the major locations and target set for the airports to be operational for service; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor and what important approach has been taken up by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. It has been decided to construct three greenfield airports at Pakyong (Sikkim), Cheithu (Nagaland) and Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh) in the North Eastern Region. Of these three airports, work at Pakyong airport in Sikkim has started with the Probable Date of Completion (PDC) in January, 2012. The other two greenfield airports are at the planning stage.

Hike in airfares for Haj pilgrims

†457. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has hiked air fares for Haj pilgrims this year;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the current fares for each Haj pilgrim and the separate details of actual fares and subsidy thereon;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(d) the expected number of Haj pilgrims going from India for Haj this year;

(e) the details of assistance provided to Haj pilgrims by the Central Government;

(f) whether Government has received any representation to withdraw the hiked fares; and

(g) the reaction of Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The cost of travel per pilgrim for Airlines has Increased considerably mainly due to increase in input costs, increase in embarkation points etc. However, the amount charged per pilgrim as travel cost had remained static since 1994.

(c) The fare being charged per pilgrim for Haj 2009 is Rs. 16,000/-. The total cost of Haj operations for the carriage of pilgrims this year is expected to be Rs. 67,000/- per pilgrim, out of which Rs. 51,000/- will be borne by the Government as subsidy.

(d) The number of pilgrims for Haj 2009 will be around 1,21,500.

(e) The following facilities are provided to the Haj pilgrims by Air India: (i) Free baggage allowance of 45 Kgs. per pilgrim; (ii) Provision of 10 litres of zam zam water free of charge to each pilgrim and carriage of same; (iii) Box meal is provided to the pilgrims on departure from India and arrival into Saudi Arabia; (iv) All other facilities as provided to the International passengers.

(f) and (g) The Ministry of External Affairs has received representations to withdraw hiked fares.

Proposal for airport modernization

458. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Airports Authority of India has any proposal to raise Rs. 2000 crores for airport modernization;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the amount raised so far at each airport;

(d) the status of modernization work so far and future action plan in this regard; and

(e) the burden of the same on the air passengers in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Airports Authority of India (AAI) has proposed to raise Rs.2000 crores in BE 2009-10 through borrowings to meet its requirement of funds for development of airports infrastructure in the country.

(c) AAI had raised short term loans amounting to Rs.380 crores till 30.09.2009.

(d) The details of works completed, in progress and planned are given in Statement-I, II, III and IV respectively.

(e) Borrowings by AAI to meet its funds requirement will not cast any burden on the passenger fares.